UNITED NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/2002/NGO/150
18 February 2002

ENGLISH ONLY

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-eighth session
Item 14 (c) of the provisional agenda

SPECIFIC GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS: MASS EXODUSES AND DISPLACED PERSONS

Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[19 January 2002]

---

*This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE. *200201089 5*

ENG

Displaced persons and Human Rights in Bosnia's Republika Srpska

Almost six years after the Dayton Peace Agreement Bosnia-Herzegowina is still a divided country. Despite generous international funding of reconstruction and infrastructure projects the Republika Srpska (RS) remains the major obstacle to the establishment of a stable and multiethnic Bosnian State. The RS which has been founded by ethnic cleansing and mass expulsion of non-Serbs still has an appalling human rights record.

Six years after the end of the war at least 700.000 Internal Displaced People (IDP) are prevented to return into their villages. According to figures of the UNHCR only 16.000 non-Serbs returned to the RS between January and July 2001. The returnees and international observers are reporting widespread discrimination of non-Serbs by the authorities of RS. Furthermore the authorities are encouraging violence against ethnic and religious minorities. At least five returning Internal displaced people have been murdered after their return in their villages. The youngest victim has been 16 years old. Many of the incidents are well organized to discourage non-Serbs from returning home. The violence directed at Bosniaks and Croats has included physical assaults, attacks with firearms and explosives, organised riots, murders, and extensive destruction of properties. Headlines in the international media made rioters in Trebinje and Banja Luka in May 2001 who prevented the rebuilding of two historic mosques destroyed by Serbs during the war. Escalating human rights violations are provoking a new exodus of Muslims, Croatians and Roma from RS.

International financial assistance should be granted only under the condition of an evident respect of human rights, a substantial and effective cooperation with The Hague Tribunal and to accept the return of non-Serb refugees. Despite conditional aid of the EU and USA the government of Republika Srpska did little to support minority returns to the RS. We are deeply concerned about the failure of international aid to produce the desired changes in the RS since 1997.

We are calling upon the United Nations Human Rights Commission to condemn human rights violations and discrimination of non-Serbs in the RS. This violence and ethnic hatred is orchestrated by the Serb Democratic Party (SDS). Officials of the SDS are controlling the Ministry for Tourism, Industry, Technology and Commerce and have a major influence on the mining and energy industry, the education system. The so called "independent expert" serving as Minister for Refugees and Displaced Persons, Mico Micic, was a physical education teacher before the war and later became an SDS politician. Before his ministerial appointment, he headed the Bijeljina association of war invalids and fallen soldiers. In many municipalities, these associations help organizing opposition to the return of refugees and displaced persons. The Ministry for Refugees and Displaced Persons has devoted the bulk of its resources to settling displaced Serbs permanently in the RS, neglecting the needs of both Serbs who want to return to the Federation and of non-Serbs seeking to come back to the RS.

Therefore the United Nations Human Rights Commission should urge the High Representative of the international community in Bosnia to dissolve and prohibit the SDS in order to ensure the respect for human rights and the establishment of a functional multiethnic Bosnian state. The Commission should call upon SFOR and the states, supporting SFOR with troops, to arrest all persons wanted for war crimes in order to ensure reconciliation and to facilitate the return of the refugees.